DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 285 412 FL 016 892

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TITLE Product Descriptions: ESL Software for Use with High School and Adult Students. A MicroSIFT Quarterly Report.
INSTITUTION Northwest Regional Educational Lab., Portland, OR. Technology Program.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE May 87
NOTE 19p.
PUB TYPE Reference Materials - Bibliographies (131)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Education; *Computer Software; Continuing Education; Difficulty Level; *English (Second Language); *Grammar; High Schools; Instructional Materials; Language Skills; *Reading Instruction; Second Language Instruction; Skill Development; *Vocabulary Development; *Writing Instruction

ABSTRACT

A listing of computer software for use in high school and adult English-as-a-second-language instruction includes over 40 items, categorized for grammar, reading/writing, or vocabulary teaching, with descriptions of each. The listings include such information as the title, focus, proficiency level, components, content, comments, and brief evaluations drawn from professional journals, when available. Content page listings also include the producer's name, price, hardware requirements, and copyright date. (MSE)

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THE Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM

ED285412

PRODUCT DESCRIPTIONS: ESL SOFTWARE FOR USE WITH HIGH SCHOOL AND ADULT STUDENTS

A MicroSIFT Quarterly Report

May 1987

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by
Bruce Carrick

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Grammar					
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Word Attack!	Davidson	49.95	AP, AT, IB, MAC	1985	14

Key: AP - Apple, AT - Atari, CO - Commodore, IB - IBM, MAC - Macintosh

GRAMMAR

English as a Second Language

Focus: Comprehensive **Proficiency**: Low-Adv

Components: 30 disks and booklet listing the topics covered.

Description: This set covers an extensive list of discrete grammar issues, grouped in three levels of difficulty. A tutorial introduces each grammar concept. Students are then asked to complete a series of multiple-choice fill-ins to demonstrate their mastery of the item. Numerous helps and examples are available on request.

Comments: This ambitious program has the makings of a good, comprehensive program. Its size and complexity, however, can leave the user somewhat disoriented, unsure of what to do next. To compound the problem, there are occasional programming deficiencies. The determined, methodical student will profit most from the program.

Evaluation:

1. Recommended with reservations. It enables students to work productively and independently at mastering traditional grammatical rules and usage. If your school follows a traditional structure-oriented grammar syllabus, this program, though expensive, may be of interest. C.A.L.L. Digest: Computers and Language Learning. January 1987.

ESL Picture Grammar

Focus: Verbs **Proficiency**: Beg-Low

Components: One disk and teacher's manual.

Description: This program is designed to give practice in the simple tense patterns of English verbs. The simple and progressive forms of present, past and future verbs are drilled in statement, negation and question form. Designed for ESL students, it attempts to replace written instructions and prompts with visual stimuli. The built-in test feature allows students to work alone and track what additional work remains.

Comments: This may be a picture grammar, but it still relies heavily on linguistic terminology to get students to perform. As a result, it loses some of its applicability to the lowest levels. However, the program will play a vital role in mid-level review and with those lower students who are conversant with grammar terminology.

Evaluation:

1. Uses a teaching approach no longer acceptable to many ESL teachers--manipulation of grammatical forms is not very highly valued. Some teachers may find this kind of practice has value in conjunction with other more communicatively oriented classroom activities. C.A.L.L. Digest: Computers and Language Learning. January 1987.

2. Highly recommended. Allows teachers to engage students in meaningful independent drill work. Teachers will have to introduce its use carefully. Electronic Learning. April 1986.

Grammar Gremlins

Focus: Survey **Proficiency**: Low-Adv

Components: One disk and teacher's manual.

Description: The program provides drill on some of the basic features of grammar and orthography that are typically troublesome to native speakers. There is a pretest and a posttest. The program also includes a game.

Comments: The tests and management system are useful, but the value of the game is questionable. Regarding the database that comes with the program, the language skills requisite for reading and operating the program are more advanced than the skills being taught or reviewed. The kinds of problems unique to ESL students are not well represented, though the problems addressed in this program are also problems for ESL students. The use of trivia and riddles may not engage an ESL student's interest as much as a native speaker's. Instructors should expect to use the editor to create data disks with problems, language and explanations better suited to their students.

Nouns/Pronouns

Focus: Nouns **Proficiency**: Beg

Components: Two program disks containing 15 lessons and program editor, 34-page teacher's manual.

Description: The objectives of this drill program are to identify the proper use and formation of nouns and pronouns dealing with number, possession and reference. A concept or rule is introduced and students respond to multiple-choice questions. Hints and explanations are also provided.

Comments: The introductory tutorials need some screening and revision.

Sentence Combining I

Focus: Phrases **Proficiency**: Low-Int

Components: Three disks, two provide tutorial material and progress checks, the third,Challenge disk, is for student input, teacher's guide and a set of reproducible masters. Challenge disk available separately for $20.

Description: By modeling grammatical forms in a visual sequence, the authors intend to teach some basic sentence combining skills for producing written English. This title focuses on pronouns, possessives, adjectives, prepositional phrases, relative pronouns, subject-verb agreement, connectives (but, since, because, and), the use of before and after, and the relevant punctuation issues of each of the above. The challenge disk allows students to combine a given set of sentences and compare their product with one example of an acceptable model.

Comments: Aside from the unnecessarily complex management system (which can be bypassed), this program provides a useful review exercise, offering good interactive practice. Typing skills are required only for the Challenge disk. Though the age appeal of the reading material on both disks is on the young side, the Challenge disk can be tailored by the instructor.

Sentence Combining II

Focus: Clauses **Proficiency**: Int-Adv

Components: Same as Sentence Combining I (above)

Description: This program uses the same format as Sentence Combining I but it covers several advanced topics: repositioning adverbs and prepositional phrases, subordinate conjunctions, relative clauses, appositve phrases, semicolons, gerunds, participles, that-clauses, passives and dividing run-ons.

Comments: See Sentence Combining I

Sentence Maker +

Focus: Verbs **Proficiency**: Beg-Adv

Components: Program disk, 3 library disks, coordinated with Grammar Mastery. Program available separately for $49.95. May wish to purchase optional packet of five Student Diskettes ($39.95) to allow several students to work at once.

Description: The exercises produced by the teacher or purchased with this authoring program give students the chance to discover English sentence patterns. Words appear on the screen in grammatical columns representing the pattern of a sentence. Students select one word from each column to create sentences that are grammatical and meaningful. The program checks each sentence for meaning and grammar.

Comments: This program offers safe, open exploration, encouraging self-directed learning. The format encourages interest, both for those who like to move at their own pace or for those who like competition. As an authoring shell it gives the teacher flexibility to expand. As part of a coordinated series, it allows the program to be used immediately. Because the program gives little feedback that helps students learn from their errors, teachers will want to intervene as students work with this.

Verb Usage 1,2,3,4

Focus: Irregular Verbs **Proficiency**: Low-Int

Components: Available as four separate programs ($29.95 each) or as a multi-pak ($89.95), each program is on one disk. Each disk contains ten lessons and a program editor. Series has one 31-page manual.

Description: The objective of this series is to facilitate the use of common verbs in past, present, past participle and infinitive forms. Students are drilled on a selection of verbs (9 or 10 to a disk) which represent mostly common verbs with irregular patterns.

Comments: The example sentences and the screen display appeal to younger students.

Verbs

Focus: Verbs **Proficiency**: Beg-Int

Components: 2 disks containing nineteen lessons and program editor, 34-page manual

Description: The student is asked to identify verbs as a part of speech, to identify verbs in past, present and future forms, and to identify contractions and subjunctive forms.

Comments: Designed for native speakers, the program could be enhanced by using the editor to add explanatory 'help' screens and to deemphasize the linguistic terminology.

READING/WRITING

Adele's Animated Alphabet

Focus: Letters **Proficiency**: Pre

Components: One disk and instructor pamphlet.

Description: The student selects a letter of the alphabet which is then presented on the screen as the first letter of a word of action. The action is then acted out in animation.

Comments: Though it is geared for a young audience, this simple, entertaining program may be a tension reducer and reward for adult prereaders.

Capitalization

Focus: Orthography **Proficiency**: Low

Components: One practice disk and one test disk, 25-page manual.

Description: The program introduces a rule and two examples, then students apply the rule on up to 25 sentences.

Comments: This program is particularly valuable to those beginning to use word processors. Teachers may want to exchange culturally rooted proper nouns for ones that are more familiar or relevant to the students.

Cause and Effect

Focus: Logic **Proficiency**: Low-Int

Components: 14 lessons on 2 disks containing a program editor, 27-page manual.

Description: Instructional and review lessons present the skill which the student will use to decide whether an underlined phrase is the cause or the effect. The readings begin at 3rd grade level and move up. The screen displays are in large print for younger eyes.

Comments: Program is intended for younger students and may have limited appeal to older students.

Fact or Opinion

Focus: Perspective **Proficiency**: Low-Int

Components: One disk with eight lessons and program editor, 28-page manual.

Description: The goal of this program is to help the student to be able to distinguish fact from opinion. The student is given a statement and asked to indicate whether it is fact or opinion. Incorrect answers bring remedial help.

Comments: The program is designed for young students. The cultural assumptions of what constitutes fact and opinion need to be addressed. This could be accomplished by replacing the tutorial with enhanced material describing typical American concepts of fact and opinion and the textual clues that writers and readers use to identify them.

Figurative Language

Focus: Figurative Language **Proficiency**: Adv

Components: Two disks containing 12 lessons and program editor, 27-page manual.

Description: This program teaches and gives practice in discrimination between simile, metaphor and personification. Students read the instructional part of the lesson, then answer multiple-choice questions. Hints and corrective feedback is available.

Comments: The content of this program as it exists is not suitable for ESL students. However, the program could be rebuilt from scratch, using the editor and the original program as a pattern.

Hide 'N Sequence

Focus: Cohesion **Proficiency**: Low-Adv

Components: A teacher's utility disk with backup; purchase includes one student disk from a choice of three: grades 3-5, 5-8, or 8-12. May purchase extra student disks (copyable) for $15.

Description: Students are challenged to find the original sentence order of literary selections. After the first line is given, students progressively reassemble the story by selecting the next sentence from a choice of three. Three selections from each of four styles of discourse (narration, exposition, description, and persuasion) are available from the publisher's disk. Students may enter up to three more passages of their own for use by their peers, giving them the opportunity to test the cohesion of their own writing style.

Comments: This program provides a learning opportunity but requires a teacher to make the task and the skills explicit. It covers many aspects of writing, such as time and sequence of tense, pronouns, slang and style. For older ESL students, teachers will want to enter their own reading selections. This program also offers an excellent opportunity for students to test and fine tune their writing abilities, especially their use of cohesive devices in various narrative styles. It is one of the few programs that actually provides for productive language from the students. While the program does not analyze the students' passages, the responses of those reading them is a guage of clarity.

Language Experience Recorder

Focus: Expression **Proficiency**: Pre-Adv

Components: Two disks (one 20-column and one 80-column editor), 54-page teacher's manual.

Description: This is a utility program based on the Language Experience Approach. Typically, the teacher would take dictation from a student. The passage is analyzed for word count, unique word count, sentence count, and average length of words and sentences. A readability analysis (grade level)

is produced from one of several indexes. Since a database for each student can be built, a cumulative word list is also produced. Ultimately, the vocabulary list provides the basis for a word recognition test, which can be taken on paper or on the computer.

Comments: The program is easy to use, but is premised on considerable amounts of one-on-one time. It is also quite extensible and can even be used by more advanced students working independently.

M-ss-ng L-nks

Focus: Cloze **Proficiency**: Beg-Adv

Components: One teacher's disk and backup; one student data disk from choice of: Young People's Literature, MicroEncyclopedia, and Classics, Old and New; 50-page teacher's manual. English Editor for entering own material available for $69.

Description: This program is designed to give students an ability to play with the language, drawing upon their implicit knowledge of language and the world around them to aid in comprehension and the drawing of inferences. Along the way, students should find their spelling improving and expand their familiarity with different styles, vocabulary, phrasing, structure, and punctuation. To accomplish all this, the program uses various cloze formats which force students to use structural clues to decipher passages. There are several deletion formats: vowels, consonants, alternating letters, all but the initial letter, all but the last letter, all but the sentence initial word, all words, alternating words, and no clues at all. Up to 72 passages can be entered.

Comments: This is one of the better early cloze programs. It is up to the the teacher to keep the students from thinking that this cloze procedure is an exploration exercise and not a test. Teachers will also have to compensate for the lack of English intuitions in ESL students. This may not be a good program to have ESL students use on their own.

Multiple Meanings

Focus: Contexting **Proficiency**: Low-Int

Components: Two disks containing eight lessons and program editor, 37-page teacher's manual.

Description: Multiple Meanings attempts to help students use context clues to expand their ability to guess the intended meaning of words. Students are presented readings selected beforehand from the collection by the teacher. Each reading contains words with multiple meanings. The student is asked to select the proper meaning. The program allows the student to see the context clues and read an explanation.

Comments: The program does not accommodate second language learners, since native speakers will have access to many more culturally specific clues (e.g., concerning the word 'course,' the clue is "What would Scouts take up the side of a mountain: a part of a meal, a path, or a class?"). The successful application of this program to ESL would depend on the ingenuity of the instructor in modifying the program.

Quartext

Focus: Cloze **Proficiency**: Low-Adv

Components: One program disk, one sample text disk with passages taken from the Longman Structural Readers, one manual. An additional authoring disk, Textloader, is available for $75.00.

Description: This recent British import uses set cloze procedure. The program consists of four games; each is a variation of the cloze format. Upon the completion of a game, students can see an evaluation of their success, but the results are not saved.

Comments: The sample passages are British, which means until American passages are provided, the Textloader is a must for the American instructor. The Textloader also gives students the opportunity to enter their own passages for use by their peers. The games are captivating and the manual is clearly and helpfully written.

Reading and Writing Connection I

Focus: Linking Words **Proficiency**: Int

Components: Two disks containing 24 lessons, 30-page manual.

Description: The aim of this program is to aid in the understanding and use of 25 phrasal and 25 clausal linking words. Disk one focuses on understanding meaning as modified by connectors, and disk two asks the student to generate complex sentences by using linking words to join two simple sentences.

Comments: It is to the credit of the program that students exercise some degree of language production. Less is required of instructors to set it up, but more monitoring will be necessary during its use. Instructors should find this program to be a good reinforcement activity for intermediate and advanced students. A second level (Level II) is promised but not yet available.

Reading Mastery Series

Focus: Comprehension **Proficiency**: Low-Int

Components: Each unit (A, B, C) comes with six disks, a management disk, a teacher's guide, a library case and backup disks.

Description: The series divides reading levels 3.0 to 8.9 into three units, A, B, and C. Each disk contains two branching stories and corresponding comprehension questions. Students are asked to choose which way they want the story to branch. Appropriate comprehension questions follow the story, based on the student's decisions. The students are also given reading options (e.g., untimed, skimming) and cloze options (by frequency or articles only). Each lesson provides definitions for 15 words. The remaining vocabulary is correlated with Vocabulary Master Series, also available from the publishers.

Comments: The reading selections rely heavily on themes (eg adventures, careers and growing up) tied closely to the age level, detracting somewhat from its usefulness for older students. However, having the opportunity to make decisions about the story line while reading may be a compensation. Since there is no editor program, one's options are limited to the stories supplied by the publisher. The comprehension questions are well designed, as are the cloze tests. Programming bugs are still evident in the operation of the program.

Reading Strategy Series

Focus: Cloze **Proficiency**: Low-Adv

Components: Nine disks, two manuals. (Requires two disk drives.)

Description: This program supports reading as a private affair, students build their own skills while teachers help them in building strategies by providing practice in using clues. There are two levels of programs. The simplest consists of several streamlined features: speed reading, letter, word and sentence scrambles, and simple cloze formats. Students set the parameters of these tasks and select stories from a data disk containing reading passages produced on any DOS 3.3 based word-processor. The second level is a teacher-created set of modified cloze exercises. Using the reading passages from the data disk, teachers create exercise disks by choosing each word to be deleted from the passage and linking them to a series of clues, including highlighted words in the passage.

Comments: This program attempts to alter the cloze format from a mere holistic testing device to one in which (1) students are given guided practice in tapping the unity of the passage, and (2) teachers can focus attention on particular instructional points. The program is flexible since it gives teachers the option of using it with no input or great amount of detailed attention. On the negative side, the manual is difficult to read and incomplete and there are a number of disks to juggle. The programming is uneven in operation, unsophisticated at times and lacks feedback routines that would be very helpful.

Who, What, Where, When, Why

Focus: Space/Time **Proficiency**: Beg

Components: One disk containing 14 lessons and program editor, 34-page manual.

Description: Beginning students are aided in the development of space and time concepts, particularly in the relationship of the 'wh-' words to the context.

Comments: While the program intends to develop mature thought for young native speakers, its value for older ESL students is in the use of the 'wh-' words in expressing those concepts and organizing discourse. Teachers may want to modify the program to make these ends more explicit.

VOCABULARY

Antonyms/Synonyms

Focus: Antonyms/Synonyms **Proficiency**: Low-Int

Components: Two disks containing 21 lessons and an editor, 34-page manual.

Description: This program gives practice identifying and using antonyms and synonyms.

Comments: This is a relatively unimaginative drill and practice, geared toward younger students. It could be used as is, without much or any modification, but it would be more useful if the vocabulary selection was revised and the use of context clues improved. Teachers could even put in directions for students to guide them in using a selected ESL dictionary to help flesh out the meanings of the words in the drills.

Basic Vocabulary Builder

Focus: Basic Nouns, Verbs, Adjectives **Proficiency**: Beg

Components: Two disks contain 23 lessons. An explanatory guide includes appendices containing the program's pictures and the correct responses. The program correlates with a text by the same author and title, available separately.

Description: This program, essentially an electronic flashcard drill, is designed to review and reinforce 272 common nouns, adjectives, and verbs. The student's performance is timed and scored.

Comments: There is no allowance made for student responses that are acceptable alternatives, e.g., sandle, shoe, slipper, or thong. Feedback for errors consists of a strong negative message. The written instructions would be incomprehensible to the typical student learning this set of vocabulary items. However, with some initial help from a teacher, a student could work independently at the program.

Compound Words and Contractions

Focus: Word Formation **Proficiency**: Beg-Low

Components: Three disks containing 30 lessons and an editor, 37-page manual.

Description: The program offers practice in identifying acceptable compounds/contractions and using them in proper contexts. The student practices joining the first half of a compound/contraction with a list of possible matches. Students also complete a sentence by selecting the appropriate compound/contraction from a list.

Comments: As it comes from the publisher, the program reflects neither a typical ESL vocabulary acquisition sequence nor a reference to English word formation patterns. The database could be reworked with these features in mind, and perhaps extended to cover things like noun phrases formed by two nouns or by a participle and noun.

Elephant Ears with Speech

Focus: Spatial Prepositions **Proficiency**: Pre

Components: Three disks and a teacher's guide. (Requires the Echo+ Speech Synthesizer set)

Description: The program is designed to reinforce 14 spatial prepositions for pre-reading students. The word appears on the screen with a corresponding image and sentence. A synthesized voice reads the sentence. The review portion asks students to choose the correct preposition.

Comments: The keyboard is used to select answers only. No typing is required. Students are given the words they missed and teachers can print the class records. Since this program is focused on K-8 students, it may produce some negative response in older users. The quality of the synthesized speech is questionable.

Essential Idioms in English

Focus: Idioms **Proficiency**: Low-Int

Components: Three disks, one level each, elementary, intermediate, advanced; together they cover most of the content of Robert J. Dixon's book by the same title.

Description: This package offers practice with over 470 primarily verbal idioms. The material is divided into 39 lessons with each lesson offering four modes of experience with the idioms: presentation, recognition, production, and competitive recognition. The meaning of each idiom is not defined but is presented in a paraphrased "equivalent" statement. Verbal idioms with separable particles are marked. All idioms are given in a sentence context, and all work with them is done in sentence contexts.

Comments: This program is ready for the ESL classroom and allows the student to work profitably with little demand on the teacher. The programmers have taken the needs of the ESL student seriously in packaging the lessons: simplicity, self-explanatory graphics, and relatively little telegraphic English. However, lower level students may require some help reading the directions the first time. Minimal keyboarding skills are required and they can be picked up while using the program. It would have been nice if more explanatory material and sample sentences for each idiom could have been made available upon user request.

Homonyms

Focus: Homonyms **Proficiency**: Beg-Low

Components: Two disks containing 20 lessons and an editor, 36-page manual.

Description: A broad range of homonyms are presented. The students' tasks include both the selection of right answers and, in the review lessons, typing the answer.

Comments: The beginning vocabulary words, unfortunately, are given in context in very complex sentences. Teachers will need to revise these.

Idea Cat I, II

Focus: Aural **Proficiency**: Beg

Components: Levels I and II contain three disks each, 31-page teacher's guide. (Requires purchase of Echo II speech synthesizer set.)

Description: The Idea Cat series is intended to bridge the gap between beginning ESL instruction and the reading stage. It reviews vocabulary, gives practice repeating the spoken word, introduces reading by allowing the student to hear the printed words, and introduces keyboarding in a nonthreatening fashion. The programs work with basic vocabulary (body parts, school, food, spatial prepositions), basic grammar ('wh' questions and the verb to be) and greetings.

Comments: Some productive spelling of the vocabulary items is required, though reading is not essential. The authors claim that two pedagogical approaches, Total Physical Response and the Natural Approach, have influenced their program. The quality of the synthesized speech is questionable. A third level is due out soon.

Mouse Math

Focus: Numbers **Proficiency**: Pre

Components: One disk, 6-page user's guide.

Description: Mouse Math provides practice with English numbers and mathematical terms, using spoken and pictoral input to direct addition and subtraction.

Comments: The quality of the synthesized speech is questionable.

Opposites

Focus: Antonyms **Proficiency**: Beg-Adv

Components: Two disks containing 25 lessons and an editor, 36-page manual.

Description: The program asks the student to read a list of three or four words and select from the group the opposite of another word at the top of the screen.

Comments: Very little needs to be done to make this simple drill program useful for ESL vocabulary expansion. With some ingenuity, teachers could modify it to drill just about any type of word matching (e.g., find the word that is the same part of speech).

Rain Maker

Focus: Association **Proficiency**: Beg-Adv

Components: Two Rain Maker disks (one for archive), one Rain Game disk, 41-page user's manual.

Description: This program is both a fun, fast arcade game, requiring students to recognize word associations in the heat of competition, and an authoring system, requiring the teacher to create a database of words for the game feature.

Comments: Teachers could create exercises for matching vocabulary items to definitions, synonyms or categories, for matching grammar patterns, and so on. The program should be a welcome addition to an ESL software lab.

Roots/Affixes

Focus: Word Formation **Proficiency**: Beg-Low

Components: Two disks containing 21 lessons and an editor, 34-page manual.

Description: This program drills students to increase their facility with which they can manipulate selected Greek or Latin roots and affixes.

Comments: Some revision will be necessry, since teachers will want to consider whether the context sentences are of an appropriate difficulty for the students they assign to this program. The same goes for the directions and explanations.

MicroSoc Series (Six titles: each described below)

Focus: Association, Classification, Relationship, Analogies, Sequence

Proficiency: Pre-Adv

Components: Each of the six titles in the series consists of one program disk. The series shares a common teacher's manual and a brief student workbook. In order to use the recordkeeping utility, one must purchase an extra SocAssist disk ($19.95).

Description: One student can race the clock or two can race each other in selecting the appropriate item to fill in the gap in a pattern or to match the prompts.

Comments: This series, though packaged for grade school (grades 1-7), should remain interesting for older students as well. To obtain the full value of the series, an ESL teacher needs to be present to act as skill outliner (to make explicit the linguistic features, tasks, and skills being used), as a moderator (these make great group exercises), and as a debriefer (to objectify the linguistic experience).

SocLink

Focus: Association **Proficiency**: Pre-Beg

Description: SocLink focuses on finding semantic connections between words.

Comments: This is very culturally loaded (states and capitals, animals and their sounds). It may have more value for prereaders who have been in the culture for some time.

SocMatch

Focus: Relationships **Proficiency**: Beg-Int

Description: SocMatch challenges students to observe common attributes and to use them as a means of organizing ideas and of problem solving. Students match the attribute or part to its owner and vice versa.

Comments: This is a useful exercise in establishing thought patterns in a second language.

SocMate

Focus: Analogies **Proficiency**: Low-Adv

Description: Students select from a list of four words the one word that best fits the missing item in the equation "A is to B as C is to D." Working with synonyms, antonyms, functions, homonyms, categories, and linear progressions, students practice reasoning skills that lead to eight kinds of analogous relationships.

Comments: This program may offer a meaningful experience to low-intermediate and even advanced students. It would make a good group exercise. It could have been better if the detractors were based on second language rather than native language learning problems.

SocOrder

Focus: Sequence **Proficiency**: Beg-Low

Description: SocOrder requires the use of logical skills to properly sequence words, sentences and numbers. Students arrange words into sentences (Game 1), sentences into lists (Game 2) and items into sequences (Game 3). Responses are made with space bar and arrow keys.

Comments: This value of the program is in its conceptual focus and not its use as a composition exercise. Game 1 is not built on a second language learning sequence. Both Games 1 and 2 do not accept logical alternatives, which makes a group setting with the teacher present the most productive arrangment. Lists of sentences are incorrectly called "paragraphs" in Game 2.

SocPix

Focus: Classification **Proficiency**: Pre

Description: SocPix focuses on the initial stages of conceptual connections between objects. It challenges students to find commonality among pictured objects.

Comment: If students verbalize their thinking processes in the new language rather than naming the objects in their own language, the program can be a valuable linguistic exercise. Some of the pictures are obscure, even for culturally attuned native speakers.

SocSort

Focus: Classification **Proficiency**: Low

Description: Students must select a category matching a given word. SocSort's objective is to develop an understanding of what words have in common as a prelude to organizing and remembering.

Comments: The lower level vocabulary is useful. The upper level is too culturally specific (i.e., cricket, grits, Oral Roberts).

Speakeasy 1 - Supermarket

Focus: Conversation **Proficiency**: Pre-Beg

Components: Two disks and a manual, Gabber cassette interface, 30-minute cassette, headphones.

Description: This package presents the student with a multisensory experience. The program design is based on the Fundamental Skills Method, recognizing the hierarchy of learning by seeing, by hearing and by repeating. Students are provided with an introduction to a commmon American experience, the supermarket, along with some appropriate vocabulary and expressions. Students observe two shoppers buying groceries, listen to their conversation, and hear the conversation again in intonationally accurate segments which are then reassembled in the backwards buildup method. At each step the program pauses to allow students to repeat, and then it resumes the lesson when the student is ready. The manual contains cultural and language background information and suggestions for follow up.

Comments: This program comes ready for use and requires little teacher support while in operation. However, since it is not a stand alone program, it does presume that the teacher incorporates the material in preparatory and follow up sessions. The testing program which is contained on the disk tests the student's ability to match pictures with written words or sentences. There is no student feedback in the testing mode. Several more titles are expected in this series in the near future.

Spell It!

Focus: Spelling **Proficiency**: Low-Adv

Components: One disk, manual

Description: Four activities allow students to practice spelling difficult words. In the first two exercises, a word is presented to the student, then disappears; the student then fills in a blank in a

sentence by typing the word. The third activity is an unscrambling exercise. The fourth is an arcade game in which the student must discriminate between the correct spelling and variations.

Comments: The program is a little unfriendly toward ESL students. Many of the directions are hard to understand since they are in telegraphic English. The selection of words is based on spelling difficulty and not usage or frequency, and there is no way for students to skip over words. However, there is an editor program for teacher modification.

Vocabulary Mastery II

Focus: Most frequent words **Proficiency**: Beg-Low

Components: The complete set is divided into three units, each containing five disks, word lists and a handbook.

Description: The program is based on the 3,000 most common words, presented in groups of ten. The computer gives the student a randomly selected sentence and asks them to type in the word that fits the blank. As students work, a file of problem words is generated, which can be reviewed separately. A game is also provided in which students race the computer in filling in the blank.

Comments: This ready-to-use program is a good review and drill exercise but is not sufficient to introduce vocabulary. It is not intended for absolute beginners. The program operation is attractive and user friendly. It is disappointing that there is no option for expanding the word lists.

Word Attack!

Focus: Expansion **Proficiency**: Low-Adv

Components: One disk, teacher's manual. Optional data disks for grades 4-9, for the S.A.T., and for roots and prefixes are available.

Description: The goal of the program is to increase the student's receptive vocabulary. The program introduces new words with a single synonymous phrase, contexts them in a sentence and tests the students with a series of sentence completion and definition matching tasks, including an arcade game.

Comments: The program is well-constructed and stimulating. Occasionally, the choice of words and sentence contexts may be inappropriate for ESL use. However, the editor allows the teacher to create multiple data disks using his or her own material.

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